

On That Great Day

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Bible Verse: 1 John 3:1-3
Preached on: Sunday, May 24, 2020

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Our text this morning comes from the letter that we've been studying over the past two or three weeks, 1 John beginning in chapter 3, the first three verses. This is a text that I've preached on many many times throughout the course of my ministry. It never gets old. It's always fresh. It's always a wonderful realm of thought to enter into and so I'm grateful to the Lord that you and I have the opportunity to study it together here this morning.

1 John 3, the first three verses. Let me read them and then we'll see what God has for us here this morning.

1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

The title of today's message is "On That Great Day." On that great day. We open the service by saying that, "This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it," Psalm 118:24, and so we have this disposition of gratitude and thanksgiving and joy that's just a reflection of the way that God has blessed us here this morning and in this day that we have life and breath and most of us have health to one degree or another, God has given us family, God has given us his word, his Spirit, he's given us his Son, we are overwhelmed with gratitude at the way that God has blessed us today and there's so much for us to give thanks to our God for. Our God reigns and our God is over human government. Our God is over their decisions. Our God is over pandemics and all of the things that are affecting every aspect of our lives today. God is over all of that and so there is an underlying and a controlling hand, there is a stability to the order of our lives that we draw upon recognizing that there's not just a stability but it's a stability that is given to us by our loving, gracious, heavenly Father who has numbered every hair on our heads. And so while things may seem contingent and uncertain from our perspective, there are no contingencies with God, there are no surprises with God. We rest in his sovereign loving goodness toward us, that he cares for us, that surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow us all the days of our lives and we will dwell in the house of

the Lord forever. My friend, I ask you, why would we not rejoice in light of those truths that belong to us in Christ? So this is a wonderful day for us to be able to share together but as wonderful as all of those things are, Scripture points us to a future day, a future time, a future event that will dwarf everything else by comparison and it's of that day that we look and that we consider and that we study here this morning in 1 John 3.

Now just by way of reminder, last time we looked at the end of chapter 2, verse 29, and we saw this, look at verse 29 with me. I hope that you have your Bibles open and that you're following along in Scripture. It's very important for you to see the word of God with your own eyes and not simply let someone else describe it to you. Chapter 2, verse 29 says,

29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

To be a Christian is to be on the receiving end of a supernatural act of God. God gives birth spiritually to his children in the act of regeneration. The Spirit through the preaching of the word of God imparts new life to someone who had previously been dead in sin; someone who has previously been a slave of sin is now made a slave of Christ. He's been set free from the stranglehold of sin and Satan and has been brought into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. These are just magnificent realities and just the passing statement of them sends waves of wonderment over my mind even as I stand here preaching. These are spectacular, enormous, consequential truths of which we speak here. So Christianity is a supernatural religion. It's not simply a religion of morality, the morality of Christianity is derivative of the supernatural act of God in saving his people. That is what changes people, it is an act of God giving birth to them that changes their lives. It's not simply self-reformation and self-power based on human wisdom.

So John has said that we are born again. He's making a point about righteous living being the mark of a true Christian. If you know that God is righteous and you know that God gives birth to his children through the act of regeneration, then it's obvious that there's a conclusion to be made. The children of God will reflect the righteousness of their Father. Human children bear the characteristics of their biological parents and in a far greater way, the true children of God, true Christians bear the spiritual characteristics of the one who gave birth to them. God is holy, God is loving, and that somehow expresses itself in the lives of everyone who's truly been born again. That's his point. If you know that God is righteous and you see somebody practicing biblical righteousness, then you can know that that person has been born of God and that's the point that he's made and that's what we looked at last time. The child of God displays the character of God because he shares in the nature of God. It shows that he is born again, he's been born, and what happens when something is born? It's a child and for a Christian, then, to be born again is to say that he is a child of God. All we're talking about here is to see the underlying flow of thought, the core of logic that John is building here in this passage.

Now as we leave verse 29 and we move into chapter 3, verse 1, there is a chapter break there, there's a, you know, there's a title there maybe in your Bible and certainly chapter 3

shows up there. It's important for you to realize that the chapter and verse divisions in our bible were introduced long after the Scriptures were originally written. They are a help that was given to the text to help us locate the text and to be able to find it, and I'm grateful to God for his providence in making that happen, but there's something that you must understand is that those chapter breaks do not represent a change in the flow of thought, they're simply a marker. The flow of thought is continuing. Chapter 3, verse 1 is not introducing a new, separate, unrelated thought to chapter 2, verse 29. It is building on it. It is continuing it. It is expanding on it. And if you can understand that, then you're going to have a wonderful opportunity to see the majestic nature and the inevitable flow of thought that John is expressing here. He has just said in verse 29 that we are born of God. Now as we step into chapter 3, verse 1, he is going to build on that thought. He stops, as it were, he ponders the majesty of that thought and expands on it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he expands on it in a way that gives us direction to rejoice in the hope that is ours in Christ and to see the natural implications for day to day life for us.

So we're going to look at this passage in three sections, one for each verse, and the first section that we see is this: John stops to ponder our great position, our great position in Christ. Look at how John reflects on the fact that we are born of God and let me just pull this together, let's skip the chapter break and maybe the marginal title that is given in your Bible and just look at verse 29 with me. "If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him. See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God." To be born of God is to be a child of God and so these two thoughts are intimately connected together, and what John is saying is, "Look," he says, he says, "See how great a love." Other translations may put it as, "Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us." The point is this, whatever the translations are doing to try to reflect the original Greek, what John is doing here is he's saying, "Stop and consider what I just said. Stop and reflect on the fact that we are children of God." This is a wonderful reality and John calls attention to it forcibly in what he says here.

See how great a love the Father has given to us. John is astonished that we should be called the children of God, and if you think about your life, if you think about who you are as originally a child of Adam, my friend, it should astonish you as well. Here you were born in sin which you inherited from your parents going all the way back to Adam, born in sin, you were hostile in mind, you were a rebel against God, you were cold, indifferent to him if not overtly, actively hostile to him, you were dead, you were blind, you were ignorant of spiritual things, your heart was hard and cold, and that's what you were like and left to your own devices you would have gone deeper and deeper into the nature of that existence. And yet here you are, my Christian friend on a Sunday morning, May 24, here you are and you are alive in Christ. Your sins have been forgiven. You have a new nature planted within you. The Spirit of God dwells within you and is working to conform you from one image of glory to another as he conforms you to the likeness of Jesus Christ. When your life is done, you will enter into heaven, you will leave behind this sinful sorrowful world and enter into a realm of blessedness, you will die and to die is gain, for you to enter into the presence of Christ is very much better Christ says in his

word over and over and over again. In John 14 he said, "I go and prepare a place for you so that you could be where I am." My friend, I'm just expanding on portions of what it means to be a Christian, familiar things that we've covered many many times.

Here's the way that we need to put this together, to have this possession of Christ and this future hope of glory that John is going to expand on in just a minute, it is astonishing that we would be in this position. It is a great and wonderful thing to recognize that we are going to live forever as a result of the grace of God. We are not going to receive the punishment that our sins deserve because Christ has borne them on our behalf. So to be born again, to be a true Christian is the greatest, noblest possible position that anyone in the world could have. It is better to be a child in India with Christ in poverty than it is to be the President of the United States without him, and we just need to have these things in balance and see things in their proportionate weight. My friend, what our position is now in Christ and what we will be and what lies ahead for us in Christ is eternally more significant than anything that is happening to us here today, and to be born again and to be a child of God is to say, "I have received all of the riches of this inheritance from my heavenly Father and no one can take it away from me. Satan cannot take it away from me. God will not allow me to fall out of it. I am secure in Christ and no one can pluck me from His nail-scarred hand."

Do you see it, my friend, how great our position is in Christ? That is what John is calling attention to. To be born again is to be in that position and he says, "You look at that, you think about that and understand what a great undeserved love and mercy it is from your heavenly Father that you're in that position." Instead of receiving the judgment that you deserve for your sins, my Christian friends, and these things apply to Christians, this is not true of all of humanity, this is the subset of humanity that is true Christianity, but to think about that is to realize that you are on the receiving end of such great love from God. He has given you grace that you don't deserve. He has been patient with your sins when he did not have to be. He has shown you mercy and compassion and helped you in your great spiritual desperation and he has done for you things that you could not do for yourself. So his love and his patience and his mercy and his grace and his kindness are just overwhelming to us. We are in the family of God. Our Father is the greatest, best, highest Father that could ever be and there is no one who could come close to approximating all that our God and Father has done for us in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we stop and we dwell on these things so that we don't pass over the text, the brief text too quickly and miss the import of what he's saying. You in Christ have a great position, my friend, and what you need to see is that all of the frustrations of life and all of the sorrows and the concerns and the anxieties over health, over finances, over relationships, over family situations, over marriages even, my friend, you must understand that there is a greater, better reality that envelops all of those things from which you are to draw a sense of wonderment and joy and hope from as you contemplate your great position in Christ. There's really no question about the fact that almost all of the travails of our soul as Christians can be traced to the fact that we've lost sight of that. We walk by sight instead of faith. We walk by what's happening today instead of the realities that we've

been speaking about and the future that is to come. We see only the problems rather than the gift that God has given to us in Christ. So my friend, I invite you and I call you back, my Christian friends, I call you back to remember who your Lord is and what he has done for you and what lies ahead for you and what is your position now. To be a child of God is to have far more than anything the world could give. If you had 10,000 worlds just like the one that we have and they all belonged to you, they would not be worthy to be compared to the position that belongs to the true child of God.

So we have this great position through our union in the Lord Jesus Christ. That affects the way that we walk through this life and – watch this – it affects the way that we relate to the world around us. It has an inevitable impact on the unsaved world and the way that we interact with it, and the way even that we interact with individual unsaved people who may be hostile to us or who may mock us, who may wonder at why we get so wrapped up in these heavenly realities. Well, John addresses that and he speaks to that as he continues on in chapter 3, verse 1. Let's look at that verse again, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and we are." He emphasizes it. He says, "We should be called children of God and we are." He says, "This is not a statement to pass over lightly." He repeats it. He emphasizes, "This is who we really are." And there's a consequence to that. He says, "For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him." If the world in its hostility crucified Christ, if the world in its hostility now rejects Christ, my friend, don't you see that we who are disciples of Christ will get the spillover effect of their rejection of him? They will reject us because of our identification with Christ? It's inevitable. This world is not our home and we should expect a sense of hostility from time to time that comes to us as a result of living in a fallen world that is hostile to the God that we love and who, more importantly, loves us and saved us. We bear the image of God, we bear the image of Christ, we carry that around with us and Scripture says that to the world we are an aroma of death. To each other we're an aroma of life but to the world we're an aroma of death and so it is not surprising that the world rejects us, that the world hates us.

John picks up this point later in chapter 3, look over at verse 13 when he says,

13 Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

And that was just on the heels of his reference to the fact that Cain killed his brother Abel. My friends, this is so very important for the hour in which we live. It is embedded into the nature of our existence in this world that we are going to be on the receiving end of hostility from it. That should not surprise us. That should not discourage us. And the response to that is not to try to fight it in the litigation courts of the world. This is not the way to go. This is not the way to fight these things. We must understand, Jesus said that blessed are you when men persecute you.

Let's look at Matthew 5. I need to dwell on this for just a moment here. Matthew 5, beginning in verse 10 in those Beatitudes that we have studied so many times in the past. Matthew 5:10 says,

10 Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

Friends, when that happens to us, rather than getting all bent out of shape because of our concern over so-called First Amendment rights here in the United States, my friends, the greater reality should be is that as we struggle for the cause of Christ here and we meet opposition from the world, one, it should not surprise us that this is happening and, secondly, when it does Christ commands us to have the exact opposite attitude that I see so often manifested in those who claim the name of Christ in the years of my existence as a Christian, rather than getting upset about it, rather than getting angry about it, rather than protesting against it, Christ tells us to take a completely different perspective on it.

Look at verse 12, he says,

12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Rejoice and be glad, Jesus said, when adversity comes to you on account of his name because there is a reward in heaven that is being built up and stored up for you for suffering for his name. Now the only reason that you wouldn't rejoice in that is because you've lost sight of these realities that Christ has called us to dwell in.

That isn't the only place that John said these kinds of things. John the apostle recorded the words of Jesus in his Gospel, chapter 15, in verse 18, Jesus said,

18 If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

Jesus said, "They persecuted Me. Don't you understand that as My disciple they will persecute you as well?" And when you take the totality of Scripture together on it, when you start to see these things happening to the church maybe in your individual life and you're tempted and I use that word advisedly, you're tempted to respond in anger and in defensiveness and, "You know, who do they think they are and they can't do this to me, and I've got my rights and blah, blah, blah." Look, look, all of your rights you transferred when you gave your life to Christ, more accurately when Christ saved you, he took sovereign possession of all of your rights. All of your rights belong to Christ. You have

no independent rights apart from what Jesus Christ has given to you and if he ordains persecution and difficulty for you, then you accept that as coming from his hand even though those who are inflicting the persecution on you may be doing it for evil motives. You look past the human instrument and you say, "This, this is all tied in together in a way that I hadn't really planned." You look at that and you say, "This is the day that the Lord has made." Am I living in a day of persecution and difficulty? Then you know what? Whatever the human secondary causes are, this is the day that the Lord has given to me and if I am suffering under the hands of men even who are acting wickedly against me, they are only acting somehow as an instrument of God in my behalf for my sanctification. It's a gift from God to suffer for the name of Christ and we don't know what the outcome of it will be but we know that God will work everything together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. Joseph could say to the brothers who sold him into slavery in Genesis 50 after years and years of outworking of the consequences of that, he could look at his brothers graciously, he could look at them and forgive them because he had this very perspective on the whole matter and he could say to them, "You meant evil against me but God meant it for good."

So, yes, we are living in a time where authorities have restricted our ability to meet together as the body of Christ and it's been difficult and I know some of you feel the isolation of that, but you and I have to be strong in Christ, we need to be courageous, and rather than looking for earthly solutions for this, we must start here, we must start here, that somehow in a way that I don't understand, you say to yourself, I don't understand it either, I don't understand that purposes of God in all of the collective calamity of this, but you say to yourself, somehow God has given this to me and as I am walking through hostility in this world and I don't have my ability to practice my faith is restricted by things that are going on in the world around me, you acknowledge that but, beloved, you go further, you go further, if you want to grow spiritually in this, you go further and you reason like this. Ah, but the fact that there's difficulty in this world, that doesn't surprise me. The fact that maybe there's hostility from the world against Christians, that doesn't surprise me. It's what they did to Christ and Christ told me in his word to expect it, and further he said when it does happen, rejoice and be glad because it is building up for you a great reward in heaven. It's what they did to the prophets, they stoned them, they killed them, they sawed them in two, Hebrews 11 says, and here we are all bent out of shape over what's happening for a few weeks in our time? I come back to the message that I preached at the start of this pandemic, this disruption which is what I prefer to call it, when God stops the church and I just come back to it and we need to all step back, we all need to step back and say why would God be doing this to the church? Why would he be directing events to have this effect on the church and humble ourselves under his hand and say, "Lord, I'm not living for this world anyway. I'm trusting You. This world has nothing for me. I expect hostility from it but even in the midst of the world's hostility I have the love of God abiding with me through the indwelling Spirit. Nothing can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

My friends, my Christian friends, those that I love and that I pray for, don't you see, don't you see how it is imperative for us to have a completely different perspective on this than being agitated and upset over every little up and down that's taking place in this very

brief period of time? Don't be surprised if the world hates you, for this reason the world does not know us because it did not know him, and the fact of the matter is that much of the change that's been imposed upon us for a time isn't even directed specifically against the church, it's leaders making decisions that are affecting all of society not simply Christians. Well, you and I, then, you and I need to come back and we come back to 1 John 3:1 and we reverse our whole perspective on it. Rather than being downcast or angry about it, we rejoice because we remember a greater reality that surpasses and transcends it all. Our heavenly Father loves us and has brought us into his family. He has chosen us out of the world. He will bless us in the end. And so we live in confidence, we live in joy and we say, "This is the day the Lord has made. I'll rejoice and be glad in it and there's a coming day where I'm going to be rejoicing even more. Whether I live or die, I'm in a win-win situation here."

That's where Scripture points us, my friends, and you can take your cues from politics if you want but you really need to take your cues from Scripture, the cues from politics will lead you into despair and discouragement and uncertainty, the cues from Scripture will lead you into joy and confidence and serenity and triumph. I invite you, I call you to respond to Scripture today rather than the world around you and I say that knowing that that is what God would have you do if you are in Christ. We've framed it in terms of the issues of the day but, beloved, everything that I've said would apply to your personal life as well.

So I ask you, I call you, with a sense of urgency I beckon you, to use a word that doesn't often come out of my mouth, I beckon you to respond to God's word and to say to yourself deep, deep, deep in your heart, "Yes, I believe these things. I will cast off, I will leave behind, I will push aside all of the distractions and all of the things that have stressed me out and caused me concern. I'm going to cast those things onto Christ who said and Scripture says in 1 Peter 5:7, casting all your anxieties upon Him because He cares for you. I'm going to cast my earthly cares upon Him and trust Him to sort them out in His way and in His time, and having done that, now I'm going to turn my attention to my position in Christ and rejoice and be glad in the love of God that has been poured out on my soul when He caused me to be born again and brought me into His family and now calls me a child of God. Why should I be discouraged? Why should my heart be lonely when Jesus is my portion?" There's a reason the hymn-writer said things like that, beloved, it's the reason why those hymns have endured while presidents and governors have come and gone, it's because those words are true and those words are the enduring truth that shaped the way that Christians should live. So what we're seeing here is our great position, it changes, it utterly changes the way that we live and think about life and what we want from it. So we have this great position that gives us great great satisfaction and, beloved, it addresses every issue of life.

You know, let me just go a little bit further here and to just state what needs to be said. This is not just an opportunity from God and it's not just a call of God. God commands us to rejoice in him. You know, God commands us, "Don't be caught up in the world." Chapter 2, verse 15, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. The world is passing away. The world is not from the Father and its lusts are passing away, but the one

who does the will of God, he abides forever." So you're commanded to respond to these things. We're not at a point and we're not in a situation where we can just casually consider these things and say, "Well, I'll take it or leave it depending on the inflection of my day, or what I think is fair or just." Beloved, God commands us to respond in a particular kind of way to the world around us. Not to love it, not to be cast down under it, but to remember who he has made us to be, to remember our Savior, our Lord, our elder brother in heaven who is representing us at the right hand of the Father and find our joy and satisfaction there. It's nothing less than this question for you today, my friend, will you respond to Christ in that way? Will you trust him? Will you rejoice in him no matter what? Because you can and you should and you must because we have this great position in him as children of God that is a reflection of the great love that he has given to us in Christ.

Well, that leads us to our second point for this morning that I've already been alluding to and that is our great hope. Our great hope. Oh, oh, this is just, this is just a magnificent magnificent verse. I've often referred to this over the course of decades as my favorite verse in the Bible. If I had to write a booklet, if someone said you must write about one verse and call it your favorite verse in the Bible, I would probably have to yield to this one and write the booklet on those terms. Verse 2. John has been speaking about how we're children of God, okay? Chapter 2, verse 29, we've been born of God. Chapter 3, verse 1, see how great a love, we should be called children of God. Now in verse 2 he's going to develop that thought about being children of God again even further, it just expands and billows out more and more and more. Chapter 3, verse 2, "Beloved," ah, there's that term of endearment with which he speaks to us, the spirit in which I'm trying to speak to you here today. "Beloved," he says, "now we are children of God." And so he's reemphasizing. He went on a little bit of a tangent. He said don't be surprised that the world doesn't know you because it doesn't know him, but now he comes right back to what the primary driving thought is throughout the text, born of God, children of God, children of God, you're in the family of God, you belong to God, he's saved you, he's adopted you into his family, he's redeemed you, he's chosen you, all of those wonderful things. It just kind of comes rapid fire like a machine gun giving us bullets of joy and bullets of hope to bring into our hearts. I know that's a pretty mixed image there but that's what came to mind.

He says, "Beloved, now we are children of God," and then he goes on, he goes on and he says this, he says, "and it has not appeared as yet what we will be." He says we're children of God now but what the fullness of that is has not yet been disclosed to us, it hasn't been manifested to us yet. We have not entered into the full possession of it all. We are children but there is more to come. There is more to come. It would be enough for us to simply be children of God and to walk through life in that blessed position, that would be far more than we deserve and that alone would be enough to fill our hearts with overflowing joy. That would be enough for us to just be in that position in this life, but what John says is that's not the half of it. It hasn't yet appeared what we're going to be, what's going to happen. So the thought unfolds like this, he says you're a child of God, that essence belongs to you and it will never change, and yet our present position in

Christ is only a down-payment on greater things yet to come. A greater glory to come will dwarf our present position, our present dignity. This is what John is alluding to.

Look at verse 2 with me again. He says, "now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be." This is amazing for this little tangential reason that I just want to touch on here. John is talking about these great realities and he is confessing his own ignorance as an apostle of the fullness of what he's referring to. He says it hasn't appeared as yet what we will be. There's something about this that even the apostle writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit doesn't fully grasp. It hasn't yet been made known to us what it is, he says, but we know something for certain and in the simplest of languages in predominantly single syllable words, John lays out before us this fact, that there is coming a great day when you and I as Christians, we will be changed. We don't know the details but we know something for certain. Look at it there in verse 2 and notice the simplicity of his language. He uses words that a child could express to express the fullest magnitude of glory. He says this, he says, "We know that when He appears," whenever Christ returns for us as he said that he would do in John 14, "I will come again," whenever Christ appears and whenever he comes back for his children something's going to happen to us, he says, "we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." My friends, I want you to understand something about what belongs to Christians and the inheritance that is ours. It is staggering, it is stunning, I don't have the vocabulary to do it justice but this is exponentially greater than anything that this world could ever offer to us and is exponentially greater than anything that we will experience in this life. The ultimate goal, the purpose for which God saved you has nothing to do with today or what is happening in the course of your lifetime. No, the final goal, the ultimate purpose is expressed here in chapter 3, verse 2 and it's this, is that Christ is going to appear for his children, he is going to call them to himself, and when he does that, whenever he does that, there will be a supernatural transformation that takes place in every true Christian and whereas in this life we have been in a gradual process of sanctification to be conformed to his image, when Christ appears it's going to happen in a moment and we will all be made like him because we will see him just as he is. I don't know what that all entails but I know that it's going to be great, it's going to be glorious, and it's going to be exceedingly above anything that we could ask or think here in this life.

These staggering words from John take us into a completely different realm. Jesus Christ is going to appear in great glory to humanity. He will appear in this world. When he comes, we who belong to him, we will see him. Oh, oh, I never get tired of the contemplation of that. We'll see him as he really is and, conjunction, there's more to it than just that, when we see him, you and I won't stay like we are now, just making it personal, when I see him in glory, I'm not gonna be like this anymore, we will be changed into a new condition, we will be transformed by his glory and that transformation will be from what we are now into a likeness into his image. We will share in his holiness. We will share in his resurrected glory. We will share in, somehow in his perfection and the sin and the despair and the frailty of this life and the guilt of it all will be a forgotten aspect of our prior existence as we enter into the realm that Christ

chose us for in which he has lovingly been storing up for us for the past 2,000 years. He says, "I go away to prepare a place for you."

Now you and I, we won't be equal to Christ in that moment, that moment that will introduce us into a condition that will never change throughout all of eternity, never change by which I mean we won't go back to what we were before. You and I will not be equal to Christ because we will never be uncreated God. We will always be a creature and the creature is never equal to the Creator but, but what lies ahead for us is a realm of glory of conformity to the image of Christ where we belong to him and we belong where he is at. The fullness of the outer reaches of the definition of the term glory will be ours. That's what's ahead for us and, Christian, that conformity to the image of Christ, seeing him, look at what it says there in verse 2, we will see him just as he is. We worship him now by faith, we pray to him now by faith, but one day faith will become sight and the grandeur of the glory of Jesus Christ will be face-to-face with us and we will be there with him as a child of God, belonging to him, he having opened up the realm of his kingdom to us, flinging open the doors and saying, "Enter into My kingdom, enter into your rest. Blessed are you, enter into the joy of your Master." And that realm of glory is going to be so magnificent, so perfect, so glorious that we have to be changed in order to enter into the experience of it and John says, "You're going to see Him face-to-face, you're going to be transformed by His power, and you're going to be fit for a heavenly kingdom that will endure forever and ever without end." And that place of blessedness, that place of supreme, immeasurable, infinite joy, infinite glory, infinite wonder, infinite love, utterly without sin, utterly without sorrow, utterly without tears, utterly without wicked people around to diminish it, utterly without any political authority able to take it away from us, all of that belonging to us, all of that the inheritance that will be ours in Christ, all of that for all of God's children who have been born again that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christian, this is your destiny. This is what God has prepared for you before the foundation of the world and it is unspeakably great. The great preacher, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, expressed it this way as he spoke to his audience and as he speaks to us today and he gathers up in his own words, in his own words the things that I've been trying so inadequately to say to you here today. Listen as I quote this great man from a prior generation. He says this, he says, "Do you know you are destined to see Him as He is? Blessed glorious vision to see the Son of God in all His glory face-to-face. You standing and looking at Him and enjoying Him for all eternity. It is only then that we will begin to understand what He did for us, the price He paid, the cost of our salvation." He goes on to say, "Oh, let us hold onto this. Shame on us for ever grumbling. Shame on us for ever saying that the Christian life is too hard. Shame on us for ever half-heartedly worshiping, praising and loving Christ and his glory. You and I are destined for that vision glorious. We shall see Him as He is face-to-face." Somehow in a way that's yet to be manifested to us, somehow, somehow you as a humble Christian today, somehow that's the glory that you're going to enter into and somehow in a way that I can't explain but somehow you will be in the presence of Christ, you will be in the presence of the eternal Son of God, he who had no beginning and will have no end, you will look into the glorified reality of his resurrection. The one who conquered death, you will see him more clearly than you see

me through the screen in front of you. That is the ultimate and final reality for us in Christ. That is our great hope, hope which is not a wish as though it may or may not happen, hope as in that which is most certainly to be fulfilled. That's what belongs to you in Christ, my friend. Now I ask you if you are truly a Christian, doesn't the greatness of that and the certainty of that because this is guaranteed to us in God's infallible inerrant word, this is what Christ has promised to his people and he never lies to us, this is what belongs to us, this is what is certainly going to happen to us one day soon enough. My friend, I ask you, doesn't that utterly transform and change the way that you look at the passing issues of today? How could it not? How could it not? How could it not?

So the issue becomes, then, we recognize our great position, we understand our great hope, something about it, and the question is, then, how does that impact us going forward in life now? What do you do with that today? How do you bring that future into today and how does it transform the way that you think about things today? Third and final point for this morning is our glad response. Our glad response and, my friend, there's a mixture of these great doctrines of which we speak, also the way that these doctrines are to affect your heart and the way that they are to influence the way that you live. If you are a Christian, my friend, this cannot help but change you. This has to change you. This has to change you from your preoccupation with the things of life and bring you into the realm where you see and understand that there are far greater realities that should be the focus of your attention. It can't help but do something to cheer you. Even if you are in the most miserable unchangeable position, maybe you're confined to a wheelchair and it's never going to get better because your spine is severed and you're never going to be able to walk again, I have family that are in that position, and you're never going to walk again, what I want you to see is that the reality of these things utterly changes your perspective on this life, this life temporary and passing, and you see more clearly than most people do that this world has nothing to offer you. This world has offered you and brought you nothing but disappointment and sorrow. What I want you to see, my friend, is this, is that even in that situation and especially in that position, is that our great hope comes and elevates your existence into something that is completely glorious and though you may not walk today, you'll walk the streets of gold. You may not be able to interact well with the world or you may be restricted in movement but what you must understand is that there's not going to be any restrictions like that in heaven in the glory that awaits you.

So this changes everything in your heart, even if it doesn't change anything about your outward circumstances, and so what this does is it provokes a glad response in us. There are implications for life today in light of these realities of being a child of God with this great hope that has been given to us and what are those realities? Verse 3, John says, "And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." To put it simply, this future hope of believers that we have, it produces purity today. Everyone, he says, everyone who is in Christ, everyone who has this hope responds to this by pursuing a life of purity, by pursuing biblical sanctification, to use the theological term. There are no exceptions. This is the way that it works. You cannot continue in sin with the recognition of this great hope that belongs to those who are in Christ if that hope is really yours.

Now today the word "hope" has come to refer to a kind of a wish that may or may not happen but in the New Testament hope is this, hope is a confident expectation that is grounded in the sure promise of an omnipotent God. I'll say it again: hope is a confident expectation grounded in the sure promise of an omnipotent God. The God who saved you, who caused you to be born again is a God of all power. He has the ability to execute his will and he's a God of truth and he has said right here in the pages of Scripture, he has promised that that's what lies ahead for all of his children.

So an omnipotent God, truthful God, has made this promise to his children and what we do in response is that we respond to that with a confident expectation that he will truly bring this to pass. God will do this. There's no doubt. There is greater surety about the outcome of the things that we've been speaking this morning than what's going to happen to your life two hours from now. There's greater certainty in this promise from God than anything in this world. And so we're confident, we expect that and because we expect that it has an effect on us. We realize that the God who has done all of these things for us is also a holy and a righteous God and we start to renew our pursuit of righteousness, practical biblical righteousness in our lives in response to everything that we have seen here in these passages, and what we find is that this has been John's point all along here.

Look at verse 28 of chapter 2. John's greater point here is, his overall point is one about righteousness. He said in verse 28, "little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming." He's coming. Abide in him. Then in verse 29 he says, "If you know that He's righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him." Then he goes into this explanation of our great hope, the glory that's ours as the children of God and he comes back to the point of righteousness yet again and he says in verse 3, "everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

What do you and I do while we're waiting for the fulfillment of this great hope? Well, we look at our lives today, we look at the relationships and the responsibilities and the opportunities that the Lord has given to us, today you look around and say, "What's my life consist of," and then you apply yourself to those in terms of the pursuit of biblical righteousness. You live those things out to the glory of God. And Scripture speaks about this abundantly throughout and John will go into more detail in the passage that we'll look at on Tuesday, but here's the thing is to possess this great glory does not lead to loose indifferent living, it leads to a life that is devoted to and central to your existence that you would in the words of Jesus, seek first his kingdom and his righteousness so that all these other things would be added to you. Christian, if you really have that hope in your heart of which we've been speaking, then that comes connected to a sincere, willing, joyful embrace of your responsibility to pursue righteousness in your life, the righteousness that is revealed in Christ, the righteousness that is revealed in his word.

So it's always hard for me to stop preaching on this passage but we've come to the end of it. Let me just say a final word of closing here. You know, we've spoken pretty directly to you this morning and challenged, you know, some of the responses that are out there

about in the world that's happening to us. Christian, know that when God's word comes to us and says these things to us and confronts us in our attitude toward the world and even our love of the world, understand that God does so for our good and for our blessing and if you've been convicted by the things of which we've spoken here today, don't resist it, don't resent it, simply repent and go to God, the gracious God who saved you, go to him and repent and say, "God, I see that I have been loving the world. I have loved the opinions of the world. I have loved the things of the world. I have wanted the world to the neglect of Your word and to the neglect of loving You. And Father, thank You for the word of God which convicts me. God, I confess my sinful preoccupation with this world and I ask You to change me and to make me into what You want me to be. You saved me and made me Your child, now make me, sanctify me and make me into what You want me to be and don't ever let me go back to that worldly mindset that I've been embracing and that has brought me so much uncertainty and sorrow in my life."

That's for you believers, for my non-Christian friend, what more can I say except to point out to you that you have embraced a world system and you are a product and a slave of a world system that in the end can only guarantee your final destruction. It does not come out well for those who reject Christ. Hell is real, hell is painful and it is eternal and that is your destiny as you sit here as an unbeliever perhaps having resisted the things that I've been saying in this message. But now the time has come and the opportunity Christ gives to you now is to recognize the fullness of these different realms and for you to repent and to leave the world behind and to come to Christ who lovingly offers you forgiveness of all of your sins based on his atoning death at the cross of Calvary and promises you, you yourself, you as I speak to you today, speaking to you right now, Christ promises to you individually all of the riches of which we've been speaking. They can be yours. Christ is fully willing to give them to you, he simply calls you to come in humble repentant faith and receive him as your Lord, as your Master, as your Savior, and he will make you a child of God as well. That's my prayer for you.

Let's close now in prayer.

Father, we just thank You for the magnificent realities of this passage. It never gets old, Father. It never, it never gets old to contemplate the wonders that You have for those, that You stored up for those that You've called to Yourself. Father, may it be the possession of everyone that hears these words, may You draw each one, may You pull them, as it were, to Christ that they would truly be saved. May You do a work in the hearts of the unbelieving, Father, and impart new life to them that they might repent and believe in Christ because, Father, I know they have no power to do it on their own, Father. If You don't act, I'm wasting my time, I'm wasting my words, Father, for them if You don't act, and so I plead with You on their behalf that You would do so, that You would show to the unbelieving Your love, mercy, grace, kindness and patience and lead them to repentance. Father, throughout Christendom, throughout Your broad church here today, I pray for my brothers and sisters in Christ variously situated, facing different kinds of challenges. Father, I pray for them and pray that You would minister Your mercy to them. For our church, Father, help us to be a church pleasing to You. For the individuals within, Father, may they grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

Father, in my own life, Father, manifest and help me to grow in Christ as well. May it be true for all of us, Lord. We've looked into the glimpses of Your glory, Father, we long for that day when the fulfillment of the full vision is made and we see Him face-to-face and we will be made like Him because we will see Christ as He is. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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