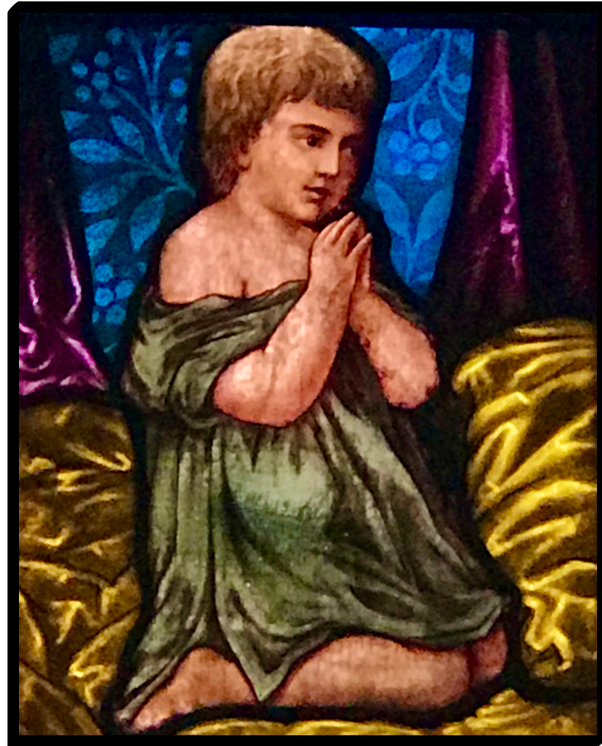


REFLECTIONS



APRIL 18, 2021

1 John 3:1-7

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

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CHILDREN OF GOD

by
Norm Wright

When reading today's selection from 1 John, I can't help but think how a rabbi at the time it was written might have responded to John's statement, "Beloved, we are God's children now." He might have asked, "What do you mean **now** you are God's children? You have always been God's children. Haven't you read Genesis?"

My fictional rabbi has a point. Genesis clearly establishes, as do the psalms and the prophets, including Jesus, that all people are children of God, that all creation finds its source in God. The Chosen People were not the only children of God. They were chosen to serve as a light to all of God's children. This understanding of God's Chosen People, the Israelites, being a light to the world calls to mind the Song of Simeon when Jesus was presented in the Temple as an infant:

*Lord, you now have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised;
For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior, whom you have prepared for all the world to see:
A Light to enlighten the nations, and the glory of your people Israel.*

Christians can become so focused on salvation as being one's ticket to heaven that we fail to see that salvation involves what Simeon refers to as opening the eyes of the world and shedding the light of God not only on who God is but also on who we are.

Referring to the resurrection of Jesus as the reset of creation to God's original script of love constitutes a reset of understanding who we are in this world. My rabbi was right, we have always been God's children, all of us. The trouble is and has been that when we start writing our own scripts, we start losing sight of that truth and begin acting as if some of us are children of God and others not or that there isn't such a thing as a child of God.

Simeon's song of praise to God reveals the important reason Jesus was presented to the world as a saving light. Jesus served the world by opening our eyes to what we have forgotten since the archetypal pursuit to be gods unto ourselves, what is known as the Fall. What was established on the first day of creation has been lost to us and largely lost on us. We still struggle to break free of the script of our making; a script promoted as the only reality there is or can be, a script whose plot line always ends in death.

What John is saying in today's lesson is that God's original script of love is like a breath of fresh air; that what was lost on us appears as something completely new to us. In the light of Christ, we recognize ourselves and all others as God's children. This rediscovered understanding that all are God's children should instill in us a deeper sense of love for all that God loves.

Those continuing to work under the script of their making don't get it; in large part, because they don't want to. They don't see people they don't want to recognize; those they perceive who are not like them, those who have a different social status, skin color, gender identity, religious affiliation, political persuasion, etc.. They don't see them as being on equal footing with them in the eyes of God, and because they don't, they feel entitled to treat them disrespectfully in thought, word, and deed.

If we're honest, we all struggle with abandoning our tendency to write our own scripts; trying to have things go our way. John addresses this struggle by describing sin as lawlessness. We need to understand lawlessness in the context of the one commandment Jesus left with his followers, to love one another as he loved them or as Jesus explained in his Sermon on the Mount, to love our neighbors as ourselves, including, those perceived as one's enemies.

Sin really boils down to selfishness; to not being true to the loving person God made us to be. Selfishness boils down to not honoring the presence of God in others and a failure to recognize the presence of God in one's self. If and when we can let go of selfishness and let God define our moments, righteousness (doing the right thing) stands a chance to come through.

When the writer of John's letter says, "No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him," he is not saying we can't sin or won't sin, but rather that in Christ our sins are covered. The second half of that statement, "no one who sins has either seen him or known him" is simply saying that we are not to become presumptuous about sinning; that we can do as we please with a sense of impunity. Freedom from sin does not mean freedom to sin. It is not that God will punish us, but rather that we will end up punishing ourselves and our neighbors.

As followers of Christ Jesus, we are called to continue his ministry of redemption; of reclaiming for all and proclaiming to all the message that all are children of God, redeemed by the love of God expressed through one of our own, Jesus. Redemption proclaims that we don't have to be fettered to the way things are but rather together, in the diversity of all of God's children, we can by God's grace re-establish God's original script of love. Amen.

Children of the Heavenly Father

***Children of the heavenly Father safely in his bosom gather;
nestling bird nor star in heaven such a refuge e'er was given.***

***God his own doth tend and nourish; in his holy courts they flourish.
From all evil things he spares them; in his mighty arms he bears them.***

(Carolina Sandell Berg, 1832-1903)

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