

Being A Child of God & Becoming Like Him

(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on April 18th 2021 – 1 John 3:1-7)

As we enter our middle age we tend to look back on our childhoods with rosy glasses. For many of us it was a wonderful time, some would say idyllic. For me, I remember it as a great time – spending hours with my Pa in the paddocks with the cows, playing backyard cricket with the whole family, trips to the beach or down the Great Ocean Road. Learning to knit and crochet. Of course, there were tears but it was mostly a happy time. A time of discovery and learning. A time of wonder and fun. A time of play and no real concerns in the world. A time when we knew we were loved. A time of laughter and not afraid to be honest. A time of making friends, of imagination, of understanding things for the first time. I remember being at the Royal Melbourne Show one year in the dairy shed where they were milking cows – a little boy beside me announced all of a sudden, I think that is a cow! I told him I thought he was right. A time when the simplest things provided such fun – watch a child with a present and how often their interest is more in the packaging than the actual gift. My father's family were children in the Depression and had very little, yet I can still see them in their later years, laughing about the most simple of times – buying fresh bread and eating out the middle on the way home and then watching their father cut it only to break into bits, whilst they quickly climbed the nearest tree to avoid punishment.

As we grow, we inherit much from our parents – looks, characteristics, values, estates. When I look back on photos of my Pa, uncle and brother they are so alike. When I met one of my Pa's nephews, I had to do a double take – it was like looking at Pa again. How often do we say to the parents of a newborn baby – who is he/she like? Some of this inheritance is environmental, some of it is genetics.

The importance of being understood as a child came home to me as a 9 year old. My Nana had just died and I overheard by dad and uncle arguing about who would inherit her small amount of money – it had been decided the grandchildren should share it. My uncle said that is okay but that would mean his three children would get nothing – I was just about to find out they had been adopted as babies. My father, immediately told him to stop being ridiculous, they were all her grandchildren as well. Being a child isn't necessarily about blood. I have continued to learn this after my brother died and I had just lost all my immediate family – it was my mother's best friend who took me under her wing and began to treat me as her child, on an equal footing with her boys.

The writer of this letter we have read today tells us we are children of God. Inheritors with each other of all that God is – inheritors of grace, inheritors of love, inheritors of freedom, inheritors of peace. So, if that is the reality, we need to live like children of God – treating each other as siblings, eager to learn, full of wonder.

The writer goes onto say that we will become like Him, that is like Jesus. We will grow and be like Jesus, the beloved son of God. We perhaps then need to think about into whose image we grow. So often we have made Jesus in our own image – just look at the depictions of Jesus in art – how often does he resemble the people of the era or the one who has paid for the painting – all those pictures of Jesus as blond and blue eyed. Thank goodness in more recent times we have seen pictures of Jesus from Asia & Africa, but I digress.

In our story from Luke today we see a little bit of what Jesus is like. We catch a glimpse of the image into which we are growing. A man for others, who will sacrifice his very self

to make a stand for what is right. A man who smashed conventional barriers between men and women, children and older people, foreigners. A man who opened people's minds as he shared his wisdom and gently reminded them of that which they already knew. A man who shared the grief of others, who listened to the story as he walked the road with them. A man who shared meals with outsiders and was so heavily criticised by the status quo for doing such. A man who was not frightened to engage with the unclean (the ill, the dying, the 'sinner') in order for them to receive forgiveness and dignity. A man who offered words of peace in the midst of fear. A man who offered words of encouragement in the midst of despondency. A man who healed body and soul.

We are the children of God. We are becoming more and more like Jesus, the Christ.

Let us go out therefore:

- Full of wonder about what the day, week or year may hold
- Celebrating the diversity of brothers and sisters we have
- Breaking barriers that seek to divide
- Eating with others whom the world seems to have forgotten
- Being open to see God work in surprising places and in surprising ways
- Continuing to learn, to learn from each other, to learn from children, to learn from people and places we least expect
- Practicing grace to all we meet
- Laughing and learning from all our experiences
- Sharing what we have
- Making peace with each other
- Enjoying life, having fun
- Living in the knowledge that we are loved by God, surrounded by grace, held safe in the arms of God who calls us his children. Amen.