

“Children of God”

January 3, 2021

First Christian Church

Scripture Text: John 1: 1,10-18

Today is January 3, and it is a hay-day for labelers. What I mean by that is people who like to put a label on certain days in an effort to make them significant, have enjoyed today. When I looked up what Scripture passages I should be using, today is labeled the second Sunday after Christmas. According to “The Twelve Days of Christmas” song, today is “10 Lord’s a Leaping”, or “10 for the ten commandments” in the “Children, Go Where I send Thee” song. Others call it the first Sunday of the new year or the Sunday before Epiphany when we celebrate the Wisemen arriving to visit Jesus and thereby recognize Jesus as the Savior of the whole world and not just Israel. All those labels have been around for a while, but I heard a new one this week that made me giggle. Today is “self-help Sunday”. As the first Sunday of the New Year, the church is supposed to help guide you in your New Year’s resolutions – to encourage you to set goals and make plans for the new year. Whether those goals be to eat better, exercise more, quit smoking, read your Bible everyday, swear less or watch less television; it is self-help Sunday.

Well, we are not going to do that. It is not that I am against setting goals and making plans to better yourself this year. I am all for that. It is just that self-help is too small for church. If you can do it yourself, you don’t need God. If you have the will and self-discipline to make the necessary changes to improve things, do it. Please do it! But recognize that God is not your personal support staff to help you do what you want to do. Now don’t get me wrong. Please pray about your resolutions. Ask God to help you. Bring God into those challenges. Tap into the power of the divine. But don’t limit God to helping you do what you want to do. Give God the opportunity to do what you cannot do.

This morning’s Scripture gives us a glimpse of what Jesus came to do that we cannot do. A glimpse of why Jesus came to earth – why Christmas. Jesus came to give us the opportunity, as v. 12 says give us the “power to become children of God.” That is something we cannot do. We are born into a family, a town, a country and a race. And once we are grown, we choose whether to stay a part of that family or not, stay in that town or country or move to another one. We can choose to change our hair color, our eye color and can spend tons of money changing our appearance and features and essentially change our race. It is even vogue to choose and change our gender. We are born with attributes and citizenship, and we can choose to claim them or change them. But we are not born children of God. And there is not enough money in the world to be able to change us into children of God. Even with all the power of self-discipline, personal connections and technology at our disposal, we remain children of earth.

But it hasn't always been that way. The introduction to John's Gospel reminds us that the Word was with God in the beginning. The Word was there back in the Garden of Eden when everything was created and humans were designed to live forever as God's children and creation's caretakers. Genesis 1:26 has God saying, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness." Notice the plural. "Let US make humankind in OUR image, according to OUR likeness." To me that plural is the different parts of God collaborating. -Yes the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. But also the dreamer God, the think outside of the box God, the practical God, the God of justice, the God of mercy, and the Word of God. The Word is the part of God that specializes in making things work, as in, taking the idea, the picture, the concept of what God wants to do, and make it work in the physical realm. Genesis 1 says over and over that God spoke and the world came into being. God spoke the Word, and the Word made it happen. The Word was with God, a part of God from the very beginning.

The Word not only made creation happen, but has been active seeing the places it broke down and coming up with schemes to fix it again. The problem was the selfishness and focus on the flesh that helps all animals survive, was overdeveloped in the caretakers – people. We and our ancestors chose to be children of the flesh, children of the earth and lost our children of God status. The Word tried to fix the problem with everything from small updates of punishment and reward to huge redoes with a flood. The Word tried revised plans to use human's overdeveloped selfishness as an advantage by blessing a specific family of people who would follow God's ways and receive land, riches, and offspring for doing it. That way everyone would want to be like Abraham and his family in order to be blessed like Abraham and his family. But as always, we wanted the blessings without doing what it takes to earn them. God continued to send updates through prophets and consequences, but to no avail. So the Word, the part of God that shapes ideas and dreams into reality, picked up His tape measure and level, left headquarters, and came to the jobsite. He took soil samples. He measured. He checked for level. He went to the file room to check things over. There He found a dust covered file filled with good intentions. Like "I'll read the Bible when life slows down." "I'll help those who are struggling to get by once my finances are secure." That file had not been pulled for a while. It seemed we always find something else to fill our time and the minimum requirement for feeling financially secure keeps going up and up. When the Word found the building material and the supply list, things became even more clear. We were ordering revenge when they should have been ordering forgiveness. We placed orders to "get even" instead of "paying it forward". We order anger instead of compassion, taking advantage instead of justice, what is easy instead of what is right. It was true in our relationship files as well as our business files.

When the Word asked why we were ordering these inferior supplies from these foreign vendors, we replied "because they are always anxious to deliver right-a-way. When we want the stuff, it is available. We often have to wait for Your deliveries." "Don't you understand," said the Word, "it takes so much more time and energy to uninstall this

terrible stuff and then install the good stuff than it would take to wait for the good stuff.” -“We are okay with this stuff. We have learned to live with it,” we say. “We can handle it. We don’t want to change it. At least this way we have control.”

But those that believed the Word, that stopped ordering the evil, even though it made them feel like they were in control. For those who waited on the Lord and claimed His deliveries found the power to become Children of God. And a little piece of Eden slipped back into the world, for the children of God began to live forever. To do what they could to become better, and lean on the Word to do what they could not do on their own.

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