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Easter 3 • 1 John 3:1–7 • April 19, 2015

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During the Easter season the epistle lessons come from 1 John. The epistle lesson appointed for the third Sunday of Easter is 1 John 3:1–7. Here is the helpful translation and lineation given by Bruce Schuchard in his commentary on the Johannine Epistles:

See what kind of love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God—

and we are.

For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know him.

Beloved,

we are the children of God now.

But what we will be has not yet been made manifest.

We know that when he is made manifest we will be like him,
because we will see him just as he is.

Now everyone who has this hope in him makes himself pure just as that one is pure.

Everyone who lives for the sake of sin lives also for the sake of lawlessness.

Indeed, sin is lawlessness.

And you know that that one was made manifest so that he might take away sins.

And in him there is no sin.

No one who abides in him lives for the sake of sin;

no one who lives for the sake of sin has either seen him or come to know him.

Children,

let no one deceive you.

The one who lives for the sake of righteousness is righteous, just as that one is righteous.¹

The Apostle John's first epistle was directed to the house churches in the province of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). In chapter 3 he begins by calling his Christian readers to marvel at the kind of undeserved love the Creator has given them. Through Jesus his Son the almighty Creator of all things has made himself our Father and has adopted us as his beloved children. (John reserves the designation "Son" for Jesus and uses the term "children" for Christians.) We should not be surprised that the world or its culture does not treat us differently. It does not recognize our new status because it did not recognize Jesus. And when Jesus appears, we will be like him (*homoioti*) because we will see him as he is. Given this hope, each one should purify himself now just as Jesus is pure. Start becoming now what you will become in the eschatological future.

John then expands on this exhortation. The opposite of purity is sin and lawlessness. Jesus was made manifest to take away sins. He is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29); "the propitiation (*hilasmos*) for the sins of whole world" (1 Jn 2:2). Those who "abide/remain" (*meno*) in Jesus, who have truly seen and known him by faith, do not continually give themselves over to sinning. Then John

warns his “little children” as their spiritual father (1 Jn 2:1; 3 Jn 4), not to be deceived. As Jesus is righteous, so also his followers give themselves to doing righteousness. Apparently the secessionists were indifferent to moral behavior in the body just as they denied the incarnation of the Son of God.

Sermon Thought

Being Like Jesus

The almighty Creator, through the atoning death and bodily resurrection of his incarnate Son, has given you his wondrous love. He has made himself your Father and adopted you as his beloved children. What about sin? Jesus came to take away your sins. And one day you will become like Jesus because you will see him as he is. Therefore purify yourselves just as Jesus is pure; practice righteousness just as Jesus is righteous.

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