



## LOVE MADE KNOWN – Part 4

### I Am a Child of God

#### 1 John 2:28-3:10

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open to 1 John 2. It is good to be together around God’s Word. We are in Week 4 of our journey through John’s first letter to the church, which means we are in verse four in our attempt to memorize 1 John 1. Thankfully, verse four is short. Is that not a relief? *“We are writing these things that our joy may be made complete.”*

Oh, my joy just feels a little more complete! God is gracious to us in giving us a catch-up verse in a sense, so we can pause after the complex grammar in the first three verses. I hope many of you are sticking with this, and if you are, I want to invite you to say 1 John 1:1-4 with me. Okay, four of you are ready—great! Four verses and four of you are ready. All right, here it goes:

*<sup>1</sup> That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— <sup>2</sup> the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— <sup>3</sup> that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.*

Good job. Well done. Keep pressing on. Don’t give up. Hopefully this is becoming second nature to you. It’s God’s Word literally hidden in your heart so it can just flow out of your mouth.

Today we’re going to start in 1 John 2:28, but before we jump in, I want to step back a minute and think about the last two weeks in particular. Two weeks ago we talked about assurance of eternal life—how to know you have eternal life. It’s a really important question. In fact, I would argue that it’s the most important question.

I was in an Uber ride this week and this really nice driver had a Buddhist family background. He described himself as unsure about religion. So I asked if he ever thinks about what will happen to him when he dies. He said he actually thinks about it a lot. He went on to talk about how he’s afraid when he thinks about it, because he doesn’t know what will happen to him. I said, “Man, you can know what will

happen to you. You can know that you have eternal life.” I shared the gospel with him and invited him to join us here as we are learning about what it means to have eternal life and to know you have eternal life.

That’s particularly the point of 1 John. John says in 5:13, *“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”* A couple weeks ago we walked through the end of chapter one and the beginning of chapter two to see false foundations for eternal life which many people often lean on. Then we walked through true foundations for eternal life. That then led to Pastor Mike last week guiding us through 1 John 2:18-27, where we learned about some people who left the church because they weren’t actually Christians.

Many of you might be asking, “Wait a minute. I’ve always heard ‘once saved, always saved.’ You can’t lose your salvation. So is that true? If you’re saved from your sin and have eternal life in heaven, can you lose that?” This is where I want you to see two realities.

Reality #1 – Superficial faith is absolutely possible. What I mean by that is faith that is not real or authentic. Maybe someone calls themselves a Christian, goes to church, even says certain words or prays certain prayers, but there isn’t actual, real, authentic faith in Jesus. This is the kind of person John is talking about whom we looked at last week in 1 John 2:19: *“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”*

John is talking about people who have been in the church but are now denying Christ. They’re not believing in Him, they’re not following Him, they’re not loving like Him—all the true foundations for assurance we talked about a couple weeks ago. John says it’s not that they lost their salvation in some way, it’s that they never experienced salvation in the first place. Theirs was a superficial faith. Superficial faith is absolutely possible, even common.

Reality #2 – Saving faith always perseveres. This means that true, authentic faith in Jesus that saves—turning from sin and yourself and trusting in Jesus as Savior and Lord of your life—always perseveres. It never fades and is never lost. So does that mean “once saved, always saved” is then true? Well, yes, in this sense.

However here’s why I would pastorally be somewhat uncomfortable with that specific language. We are so confused today about what the word ‘saved’ even means. So many people think saved means, “I go to church. I prayed a certain prayer. I even made a decision in church one day.” When we think saved, we’re only thinking of one moment in time. In reality, the Bible talks about salvation much more holistically than this.

**All who have been justified before God are being sanctified by God and will be glorified with God.**

The Bible talks about how we have been saved, how we are being saved, how we will be saved. “Have been saved” refers to our justification—the moment when we repent, believe and turn from our sin and ourselves—when we trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. That happens at a point in time. At that point, God declares us forgiven of all our sin based on faith alone in Jesus alone. But that point in time is not the end of the story.

“Being saved” refers to how that point in time triggers a process over time which the Bible calls sanctification. It’s a process in which our faith grows as we trust in Jesus more and more and more, as we obey Jesus more and more and more, and we grow to love like Jesus loves, live like He lived, walk as He walked (1 John 2:6). This takes place until the day when we “will be saved,” which is a reference to the day coming in the future when this life is over and we are fully and finally free from all sin and death and sorrow, when our salvation is complete.

When you put all that together, you realize “once saved, always saved” could be easily misunderstood, even though true in essence. I would prefer to say “saving faith.” True authentic faith in Jesus always perseveres. It always lasts. It is never lost. So to use the terminology we see in Scripture, it’s 100% biblical to say, “All who have been justified before God are being sanctified by God and will be glorified with God—guaranteed.” That’s the picture the Bible gives us.

I share all that as your pastor, because I feel like I’m walking a tight rope on Sundays on this topic specifically. On one hand, I know many people in our church have saving faith in Jesus. If that’s the case, I want to encourage you that you are primarily who John is writing to in this letter. He wants you to be encouraged with confidence as followers of Jesus. I want you to be encouraged like that, especially in this incredible passage we’re about to dive into.

At the same time, I also know there are some people sitting here who do not have saving faith in Jesus. We either have no faith in Jesus, or a superficial faith in Jesus. If that’s the case, then I want to encourage you to put your faith in Jesus really and truly and biblically. I want to plead with you to stop playing games with Jesus while you love for this world.

I know that in saying things like that, it could maybe come across as overly serious or even negative. But this is serious. This is eternally serious. I can’t think of anything more serious. If it sounds negative, well, think of it this way. When you go to a doctor to get a report on recent scans, if you have cancer, what would you prefer? That the doctor just be positive and say, “You look great,” even though you have cancer? Or would you prefer a doctor who says, “Things are not good, but they can change if

we act now”? That’s what I’m trying to do. I’m trying to say that for many people, things are not right before God and if we don’t act now, it will be fatal—eternally fatal.

But things can change if you act now. I hope that’s what you hear. I pray that’s what you hear. They’re sometimes hard words—and they’re not my words. They’re God’s words. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is clearly not in him (1 John 2:15). Whoever says, “I know Him,” but does not keep His commandments is a liar (1 John 2:4). I know that saying those words is not politically correct. They won’t make me or anyone popular. But for what it’s worth, my aim is not to be politically correct or popular. My aim is to be a pastor, which means my goal is higher than being liked for everything I say. My goal is that you might live for all eternity. That’s what I’m working for. That’s why we’re reading this book, week after week after week.

All that then leads us to ask, “How can we know if we have superficial faith or saving faith?” The Bible is saying we can be sure we have eternal life—so how can we be sure? On top of what we’ve seen the last couple weeks, this question leads us to the next part of 1 John today/ This passage is awesome. I mean, they’re all awesome. Everything in the book is awesome. But follow along as we read 1 John 2:28-3:10:

*<sup>28</sup> And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. <sup>29</sup> If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.*

*<sup>3:1</sup> See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

*<sup>4</sup> Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup> You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. <sup>6</sup> No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. <sup>7</sup> Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. <sup>8</sup> Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup> No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. <sup>10</sup> By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*

Did you notice in what we just read how many times John uses family language? Children. Born. Father. Even the word brother at the end. Six times we see “children.” Four times we see “born” or “seed.” God is called Father in verse 1. Christians are called brothers in verse 10. Twelve total references to family in twelve verses. So here’s the truth I want you to see today.

**If you want to experience assurance of eternal life, you must understand adoption into God's family.**

To be a Christian means you have been born again as a child of God. More specifically, to be a Christian means you've not just been born. No one is born a child of God. I want to pause for a minute before we dive into the intricacies of this text and I want us to get some perspective.

I want to introduce you to a brother I met in Ethiopia named Tamrat. In July, we had over 200 members of our church family in Ethiopia and Tamrat had the responsibility of coordinating, directing and leading where a variety of teams people were to spread out across the capital of Ethiopia.

I thought when I first met this brother that he was an incredible mission trip coordinator. But what he was doing for us was a side deal for him. He actually leads all the ministry to orphans in Ethiopia which we've had the opportunity to partner with. I want to introduce him to you, but I want you to hear a little bit about his story. So Tamrat, give us a picture of your life growing up.

**Tamrat:** When I was three years old, my father died and I lived with my grandma until I was six. At age six, I joined a Christian orphanage in Ethiopia and I grew up there hearing God's Word. But I really did not understand what it really takes to be a child of God. When I reached age 18, when I was preparing myself to graduate from high school, I experienced what it means to be a child of God. I got connected to Christ in a personal way. That day was so unique. I said to myself, "I have now become a child of God."

Most of you who grew up with parents understand having God as a Father. But this meant a lot for me as a fatherless person. I had no earthly father with me. So that feeling was so powerful that it made me commit my life to follow this God Who created the universe. Now I had an even bigger Father than all those who have earthly fathers. That has been an encouragement for me as I go through different life circumstances. I can always say, "I have God," and I have Him in a unique way.

I now have a family. I have three boys and a girl—Barnabas, Paul, Silas and Lydia, my apostolic team. One day my son came and asked me, "Dad, you haven't had a dad and you grew up in an orphanage. How is it that you are such a good dad to us? Where did you learn that?" I said to him, "Son, I have God as a Father and everything I am today is because I know my Father in heaven Who takes good care of me. That's where I learned to be a good dad."

In the orphanage where I'm working today, this is my intention. I have learned that God is my Father, and I want children in Selamta Family Project to experience God as their Father. It really means a lot for a child growing up in an orphanage or in the Selamta Family Home. Knowing God as a Father will change their world; that is what I have experienced. God is my Father and when I say that, I really mean

He's been with me through ups and downs. His love has never changed. Each time I would go astray, He would chase me and bring me back to the right track. This is the God I worship and serve. This is the God I want our children to know personally. Thank you.

**David:** To give you a picture of that, Tamrat leads this ministry called Selamta, but instead of being a more traditional orphanage, they take orphans and put them in homes with brothers, sisters and parents, where they will belong to that family just like any child would belong until they go to be with the Lord. In the process, they show these kids that God is Father.

As we walk through this text, I want you to picture the Christian life in these terms. One of my favorite books of all time is J.I. Packer's Knowing God. I can't recommend that book highly enough to you. In it, Packer asks the question, "What is a Christian?" And this is his answer: "The question could be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God as Father." That's the essence of what it means to be a Christian. Packer explains how the New Testament teaches that over and over again, pointing to 1 John 3:1 as one example: "*See what kind of love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God.*" Packer goes on to say:

If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, of having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means he does not understand Christianity very well at all.

I want to understand Christianity well. I want the people in this church to understand Christianity well. I want you to make much of the thought of being God's child, of having God as your Father. I want that reality to prompt and control your worship, prayers, work, friendships, marriage and family—your entire outlook on life, like we just heard.

This text speaks to the Christian, the follower of Jesus, from the first words in verse 28, "Little children." John has already said he's talking to true believers in Christ, those with saving faith in Christ. Here are five truths for the Christian that I want you to let soak in.

1. God is our perfect Father. For the Christian, God is our perfect Father. This is really good news for students in this gathering right now, for adults who either don't have or have not had a dad. Or maybe you don't have or have not had a good loving dad. It's good news to hear that God is our perfect Father. That's good news even if you grew up with a great dad. It's still good news, because God is a lot better than him. He's infinitely better than your good dad.

God is perfectly loving, perfectly kind, perfectly wise. God always knows what is best for us. God is perfectly powerful. He's never unable to act on His children's behalf. God is perfectly knowledgeable. He knows everything about our lives. There's nothing hidden from Him—past, present or

future. God is perfectly good. So Christian, this perfect, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving sovereign God of the universe is your Dad. He's your Father in heaven.

*"See what kind of love the Father has given us,"* some translations say lavished on us, *"that we should be called his children."* I love that phrase: what kind of love. Some translations say what manner of love or such a great love. The word in the original language of the New Testament occurs only seven times in the New Testament and every time it implies astonishment, amazement. Originally the adjective meant "of what country." Think about it. It's like John is saying, "The Father's love is so unearthly, so foreign to anything else we know or experience in this world. It's other-worldly." The Christian God has other-worldly love for you.

Don't just let this apply to other people. Right where you're sitting here today, God is your heavenly Father and you belong in His family. Salvation is not just God as Judge sitting on a bench and declaring you forgiven of all your sins, as if that's the end of the story. Yes, when you place your faith in Jesus, God as Judge forgives you of your sins. But then He rises from the bench, comes down to where you are, takes off your chains and says, "Come home with Me as My son or daughter." God says this to you. God does this for you. That's other-worldly. That's so foreign. How is that even possible?

2. Jesus is our perfect Brother. Now, that feels almost inappropriate to say. We think of Jesus as Savior, as our Lord and King—not as our Brother. Listen to what the Bible teaches. Hebrews 2:11-13 says:

*For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me."*

Listen to how Jesus refers to His disciples after He rose from the dead:

- Matthew 28:10, *"Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.'"*
- John 20:17, *"Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."'"*
- Mark 3:35, *"Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister."*

The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus is the unique Son of God—God in the flesh—but He is also our perfect Brother, Who made it possible for us to be adopted into the family. This is what 1 John 3 is all about. If you look at the descriptions of Jesus here, you see in 1 John 2:29 that He's righteous. In 1 John 3:3, He's pure. In verse five we learn that in Him there is no sin. He's perfect, righteous, pure, totally without sin. Sin is nowhere to be found in Jesus' nature. He is totally unlike us. He is our perfect Brother who came, according to verse five, *"to take away sins."* Look at verse eight. The reason the Son

of God appeared was what? Why did Jesus, the Son of God, our perfect Brother, appear? *“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”*

Think about that. The whole point is that the devil’s work is sin. It says, *“The devil has been sinning since the beginning.”* Since Genesis 3, the devil has been tempting men and women, every single one of us, to turn aside from God’s way to our own way. Tempting us to turn away from God, leading us away from life to death—that is the devil’s work, but Jesus came to destroy that work forever.

How did He do that? That’s 1 John 2:1-2, which we’ve already studied: *“Jesus Christ the righteous...is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”* Jesus came, He lived without sin, then He died to pay the price for sin, as a propitiation—a sacrifice—for our sin. Then three days later He rose from the dead in victory over sin and the devil. That’s a good Big Brother to have, One Who has conquered death and the devil. The Bible teaches that all who turn from their sin and trust in Jesus are welcomed in to the family as children of God.

I’ve prayed today, pleading before God, “Please, O God, adopt people into Your family today.” I know some of you are here right now, and you do not know God as Father, because you’ve not put saving faith in Jesus. You’ve not turned from your sin and yourself, putting your trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. I invite you to be adopted by God today. I’m telling you, that can happen right where you’re sitting. You can become a child of God. That’s a great day—an eternally great day!

3. We are imperfect children. God is our perfect Father and Jesus is our perfect Brother. But even after we’re adopted into God’s family through faith in Jesus, the third truth is this: we are imperfect children. We’ve seen that all over 1 John as we’ve been studying this book. None of us is a perfect child of God. We all still struggle with sin.

On a personal level, this is part of how God has used 1 John in my life this last month. I have become so much more aware of sin in my own life. I would say I’m far more aware in the last few weeks than I was before we started this study. I’ve been convicted about sin on different levels and in different ways. I won’t go into all the details, but earlier this week I was preaching down in New Orleans, where I did my seminary and theological education many years ago. As I was spending time with God on a Tuesday morning, I was freshly convicted of sin that I had not confessed to God or to others during my time in New Orleans years ago. It was painful just thinking about it—shameful, in a sense.

My first thought was, “I don’t even want to admit that before God or anybody else. I just want to sweep that under the rug.” But I knew, based on 1 John, that I couldn’t. So I went to two particular people I had sinned against and confessed that to them. It was embarrassing. I did not want to do it. But I was preaching on 1 Corinthians 4 which talks about how God will one day bring to light the things hidden in darkness and I realized, “I need to do this now.” It was an obedience issue, as though everything we’re walking through in 1 John was flooding into my heart. I just need to tell you how good

a Father we have in God. I was ashamed, I confessed my sin to these brothers, and both of them poured out God's grace on my life. They forgave me and ended up encouraging and affirming me. I was in tears. I'm so sinful, and God is so merciful.

We are imperfect children. Even as children of God, we sin, which 1 John 3 and 4 defines as lawlessness. We break God's law. We all do things our own way instead of God's ways. It's the attitude of our hearts that either says, "I don't want to know what God says—I just want to do what I want to do," or, "I know what God says and I'm going to disobey it." These are horrible things for a son or daughter to say to a Father. He's a Father Whose ways are always, always, always loving and good and best. That's the difference between earthly fathers and our heavenly Father.

I love my kids. Parents all across this room love their kids. We don't wish ill for our kids. We try to teach them and show them how to live in ways that will be good for them. We'd never want to hurt them. Yet sometimes we don't do what's best for them. Maybe we give them counsel that's not good, because we're not perfect. Heather and I often look at each other and say, "Who put us in charge of these kids? We don't know what we're doing. How do we parent them?" We don't know what to do in this or that circumstance.

But here's the beauty: God never asks, "What do I do?" He's perfect. He never doesn't know what to do. He never, ever, ever, ever gives bad counsel. Never. He's our perfect Father. He always knows what is best, always tells us what is best. Yet, we are prone to not trust Him. We're prone to rebel against His Word. That's the essence of sin here. And to make it even more sobering, since we're not following God our Father, then who are we following when we sin? First John 3:8 says, "*Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil.*"

Whenever we sin, we are like the devil, acting in outright rebellion against God. Whenever we sin, even the smallest sin in our lives, we are following the devil who hates us and wants to lead us to death, instead of our perfect Father Who loves us and wants to give us life. So when we sin, what does the imperfect child of God do? The imperfect child of God does what we've seen already in 1 John. We confess our sins, knowing that "*God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness...*" (1 John 1:9). If we sin, 1 John 2:1 says, "*we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*" Jesus, our perfect Brother, is our Advocate Whose sacrifice covers over our sins. So we confess our sin and turn from it by His grace and mercy. We come back to Him as our Father and say, "I'm sorry. I don't want to do that anymore. I don't want to think that. I don't want to desire that."

I think about my dad on earth. His birthday actually would have been today, if he had not suddenly, unexpectedly gone to be with the Lord years ago. I love my dad, because he loved me so much. He was the kind of dad who was active in my life in every way. He was caring, always coaching me at every game. He was my biggest fan and best friend.

So I obviously look back with regret on the times when I dishonored him or disobeyed him. He was so good to me. I did things I thought were best, but I inevitably learned that he was a lot wiser than I was. I would go to him and he would of course forgive me. As we would talk, I would learn more and more and more to trust him.

This is the Christian life—daily learning to trust God more than we trust ourselves. When we sin against Him, when we go to Him and receive His forgiveness, we will grow in our experience of the good life that our perfect Father desires and has designed for us. This is Christianity—imperfect children with a perfect Father, growing in His grace to know and trust and love Him more and more and more. Which leads to the fourth truth.

4. We now live to display the family likeness. Putting all this together: God is our Father, Jesus is our Brother, we are imperfect children, but Jesus has destroyed the works of the devil. Sin does not have power over us anymore. We are free to experience life as children of God, so we grow more and more and more into the likeness of our Father.

We see this in our own families. If you're a parent, don't you see yourself in your kids? In good ways and not-so-good ways? Don't you see your parents in you sometimes? I sometimes say to Heather, "I've become my dad." She'll look at me and say, "I've become my mom." Again, in good ways or sometimes bad ways. But the good thing is when God is your heavenly Father, the more you become like Him, the better it always is.

In my Bible reading this week I just happened to be in Ephesians 5:1, "*Be imitators of God as beloved children.*" I thought, that's it. That's the Christian life—growing to imitate our Father, as His children, specifically being conformed to the image of our Brother. If you put this together with two of our favorite verses that we go to all the time, Romans 8:28-29,, we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose. Even through the toughest things in life, God is working together for good. What's the purpose that He's working these things together for? "*For those he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*"

The whole point there is that our purpose is to be conformed into the image of Jesus. All things are working together toward that end, that we might become more and more and more like Jesus. This is why 1 John 3 says all it does. Look at verse two: "*We know that when he appears (this is what we're looking forward to), we shall be like him.*" Verse three: "*Everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*"

It's after John says this that he talks about how we don't keep on sinning. If we do keep on sinning, it's a sure sign we don't know Jesus—that we are not children of God. Listen to verse none: "*No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on*

*sinning because he has been born of God.*” Now again, when John says “keep on sinning,” he’s not saying that the child of God never sins. The word picture here is a picture of actively, continually sinning, without confession, without repentance, without any desire to turn from sin.

The Bible is saying that for the Christian—for the child of God—persistent sin against the Father without confession and repentance is inconceivable. For a child of God, His Spirit lives in you. You have new life in Him and you’re growing into His likeness, so you flee sin. If or when there comes a point when you fall into sin, you don’t stay there and live in it. You leave it. You hate it. You confess it. You fight it. And the next time you’re tempted, you fight it with greater diligence and greater passion, because you hate it all the more. Why? Because you want to be like Jesus.

That’s what it means to be a Christian. You want to follow Christ and you hate the fact that you still fall short. You don’t want to fall short anymore. You want to please your Father. You want to follow His ways and enjoy His life. As a result, you can’t wait until the day when you won’t sin anymore.

5. We are looking forward to the family reunion. Now, I don’t know what comes to your mind when you hear the term “family reunion.” For some of you, it’s not a positive time. If that’s the case, just get that out of your mind for a minute. This is not the kind you dread.

From the first verse we read in this passage, we hear about Jesus’ coming. Not just His first coming, when He came to destroy the works of the devil, but His second coming. We read about His appearing in 1 John 3:2 and the word there refers to the arrival a King or a Ruler with splendor and majesty. Here’s the picture. Jesus came once, 2,000 years ago, as a baby, born in a manger, to destroy the devil. But brothers and sisters, Jesus is coming back again, any time, any day—it could be today. But this time He’s not coming as a baby. He’s coming as a King. Not in a manger—he’ll be riding on a white horse. He won’t be coming to destroy the devil. He’ll be coming as the One Who has already destroyed the devil, to claim that which belongs to Him.

It says in 1 John 3:2 that we are going to see Him physically—literally physically. There’s going to be a day when suddenly, instantly, we’re going to see Him. Out of the blue, we’re going to see Him in all His glory. So Christian, look forward to that day more than you look forward to anything else. Look forward to that day more than you look forward to your graduation, vacation, wedding, next promotion, next raise, next purchase or even retirement. Look forward to that day more than anything else in this world. Because on that day, we’re going to see Him and we are going to be like Him—free from sin, free from sorrow, free from death, free to live forever as children of God. We will be with God our perfect Father and Jesus our perfect Brother, along with brothers and sisters from every nation, tribe and tongue—the adopted family of God.

I was reading and praying this last week for the requests that people submitted on response cards. Without using any names, here’s just a sampling from them: One person said, “My husband’s first cancer

treatment is tomorrow.” “My friend has Stage 3 cancer.” Another said, “My dad just learned he has Stage 4 lung cancer and my family needs a miracle right now.” Lee Vaughan, one of our pastors and long-time church member is in ICU and is critical right now, waiting to hear the prognosis for the future.

Another wrote, “My spouse is walking away from God and from our marriage. We have three young children.” And many others wrote, “I need prayers for God to restore my marriage, to restore my husband or my wife.”

Another said, “Pray for me as I look for a home. I am special needs, 25 years old. My mom can’t take care of me, so I’m living in an elderly home right now and I want to be around people closer to my age.” Another, “Pray for my co-worker who just lost her daughter to suicide.” I could go on and on.

These are a microcosm of what is represented in our church. I know that. There are different hurts and pains and struggles. Brothers and sisters in Christ, I want to remind us today, based on God’s Word in 1 John, that we have a Father in heaven Who is perfect. We have a perfect Brother at His right hand right now Who is interceding for us in the middle of all these things. He knows all of them. And one day, the Father is going to say to the Son at His right hand, “It’s time.” And the Son is going to come back. On that day, cancer will be no more, special needs will be no more, divorce will be no more, broken relationships will be beautifully restored, sin and sorrow will totally cease, death itself will fully and finally be destroyed.

So as imperfect children, let’s live every day to grow into His likeness. As we do, every day, let’s fix our eyes on the sky, looking forward to the family reunion when we will see His face, join with family from all nations and every generation, as He wipes away every tear from our eyes forever. Then we will know the wonder of what it means to say, “I am a child of God.”

Will you pray with me?

O God, our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. We praise Your name for the love You have lavished on us. God, I pray that in this room, right now, people would come to know You as Father. I pray that there would be some students, some adults who see that they’re separated from You. Maybe they’ve even gone through religious motions in their lives, but they don’t know You as Dad—as Father—through Jesus. I pray that You would bring them into the family, even right now. Bring them to put their faith and trust in You in their heart.

Then in the process, I pray that by Your Spirit You would encourage Your sons and daughters in the middle of whatever they’re struggling with—with the sin in their lives, in the middle of the sorrow they’re enduring—and that they would know they are loved by You, forgiven of their sin, freed from its power and filled with Your hope in the midst of even the darkest days. May they know You are with them and that You’re working even these things for good, and that ultimately these things will not have the last

word. Your grace, mercy and love as our Father will have the last word. All glory be to Your name, our Father in heaven. In Jesus, our perfect Brother's name we pray. Amen.

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