

Easter 3, 2009
Good Hope Lutheran Church
I John 3: 2

The second Bible reading in your bulletin today, comes to us from the first letter written by John. We are in chapter 3, verse 2, where it says, Beloved, we are God's children now. What we *will* be, has not yet been revealed, but we do know this—we will be like Him.

The Word of God. And we pray:
Heavenly Father, take us as we are, and make us what you want us to be. Remind us of our Baptisms, how we have been joined to Christ and adopted as your very own children. As your children Father, let it be, that we grow up each day in faith and love and obedience to your Word; all in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, AMEN.

So. What do you want to be when you grow up? What do you want to be when you grow up, we ask that question of small children all the time, and we get all kinds of answers. Policemen, firemen, doctors—look around the room today, all the cute little kids? One of them might be operating on your hernia in a couple of years, you never know. Take me now Lord! Anyway. What do you want to be when you grow up, I've got a son finishing his freshman year in college, another son a high school junior just starting to look at colleges; and an 8th grade son who when he was five told me once he wanted to be a garbage man when he grew up, so this is a question. "What do you want to be when you grow up," this is a question that's kind of frequent in my family. And, I daresay, probably pretty common in yours too.

What we need to understand today is, that this is also a question God has for each and every one of us. What do you want to be when you grow up?—and we're not talking jobs here, or careers, we're talking stuff that really matters a whole lot more, what kind of a person do you want to be? What sort of reputation do you want to build, what kind of legacy do you want to leave behind, what sort of nice things do you want people to say about you at your funeral, before they leave your casket in the cemetery and head back to the church for lunch. What? God would like to know.

Today's lesson from first John chapter 3 gives us some important insight into this topic, and I'd like to turn to the lesson right now. Verse 2 in particular, which again to paraphrase a bit, runs as follows: Beloved. We are God's children now. What we will become has not yet been revealed, but we do know this—we will be like Him.

Point 1. We are God's children now. That's actually pretty good news, isn't it? That's great news! That's our salvation! You see, in the mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for you, and for His sake God forgives you all your sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ and are baptized in His name, He gives the power to become, what? Veteran Lutherans who have the hymnal memorized should know the answer, He gives the power to become, what? The children of God, we believe and we

have been baptized, so that is what we have become, the children of God! And, imperfect people that we are, still we know how to love *our* children. We know how to pick them up and hug them and hold them and to find ways large and small every day to let them know we love them very much well. If we can do that for our children. Imperfect people that we are. You think God knows how to love *His* children? You are a child of God and you are loved, for today, and tomorrow, and forever—no fear. No worry. The kind of happy-go-lucky joy we see in little ones, and maybe envy? It can be yours now, as a child cherished and loved by the Almighty Father, what do you have to fear, why do you have to fear it, give it to the Father! Dad will take care of things for you, I promise. You are a child, a child of God, and you are loved, that's # 1.

Point 2, like any child, you do need to grow up. Please. Grow up. There are sins in your life that have been there for decades now, decades! And you may have confessed them to God, which is nice, but are you ever really going to get serious about changing? The way you speak, the way you act. The moods you let yourself get into, and how those moods affect your family. Pet sins, bad habits, awful habits, old resentments; insults you've received, both real and imagined, and how you lie awake at night thinking about it till you're so mad you can't see straight, been there! Done that! Not

too proud to admit it, and I hope you aren't either—kids. Let's grow up, shall we?

Those of you who are parents, you know, laying down the law and expecting your child to grow up, is a frowny faced way of saying to that child, I really do love you. Think about it. Laying down the law to your own children is a frowny faced, back handed way of saying I love you kid. So also with us and God. God does love you—that's why He expects you to grow up. He will help, He offers His Holy Spirit day in and day out, He will help. But the expectation is real. The Good News of the Gospel is, God loves His children! The bad news just might be, God loves His children!—which means He does expect you to grow up. Starting now.

Finally, point 3. As the verse says, “what we will become, has not yet been revealed. But we do know this, when *He* is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” Jesus Christ, who died and rose again, will be back one day, judge of the living and the dead, His kingdom to have no end, and when He does come back. He'll take us with Him. And what His Kingdom is like—what exactly we will be like forever *in that* Kingdom—no human being knows, no human being can describe. We don't need to know, we don't need to describe it. We know enough: We will be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is, and so in *this* world we always always always, live in

hope.

May the hope of Jesus Christ fill you this day, as you live as His child both now and forever, AMEN.